

# An Iranian View of US Psychological Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan

By Njdeh Asisian

**Editorial Abstract:** *The author, a former Iranian citizen and soldier, offers a unique perspective on contemporary PSYOP efforts. He provides background on Iranian PSYOP organizations and views, then describes Coalition efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan as seen through the eyes of Iranian military authors.*

In the last few decades, psychological operations became a very important part of modern military doctrine. In general, PSYOP intends to weaken the enemy's will to fight, give extra strength to friendly forces, and—perhaps the most important part—reduce the number of human casualties during military operations.

Allied forces used psychological operations during World War II when engaged in a bloody war with the Axis forces in the European and in the Pacific Theaters. In the past fifty years, we have witnessed noteworthy progress of psychological operations based on modern technology, and a better understanding of human psychology. Since the end of WWII, new conflicts and international problems have risen one after another. The latest international crisis was 9/11, when Al Qaeda members attacked the United States mainland. This attack generated a critical reaction from the US and precipitated US involvement in two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Naturally the regional states—especially Iran—became interested in understanding the nature of the US Army's astonishing initial success in both countries. Iran, as the most important and powerful country in this region, has legitimate reasons to be more cautious about the US Army's presence on both its eastern and western frontiers. At the same time, one should not forget that Iran and the US have had very strange relations since 1979, and there is no hope of improvement in the foreseeable future.

The recently published *Iranian Journal of Psychological Operations* paid extra attention to the US Army PSYOP effort in both Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and published an extensive analysis titled “A Comparative Study of US PSYOP in Iraq and Afghanistan” by Mr. Ali Reza Biabanavard. He has a master's degree in political science but no degree in psychology. His analysis is based on the theoretical issues of war and peace, the evolutionary process of PSYOP in the US, and finally an Iranian evaluation of the US Army's PSYOP activities in OEF/OIF.<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand the nature of Iran's military and security structure, one should become familiar with the Revolutionary Guard Corp's (IRGC) history and its operations, which is the first part of this article. The second part discusses the background of Iran-US relations, and why Iran feels insecure with the presence of US forces in the region. This includes analysis of what the Iranians learned from the Iraq and Afghan wars, as well as how they intend to contain any new US PSYOP actions in the region.



*One face of US PSYOP in Southwest Asia. (Defense Link)*

## The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps & the Journal of Psychological Operations

The main idea behind the IRGC's creation was protection of new political elite members, and protection of the regime at any cost. The IRGC's members and affiliates are fully trusted and are loyal to the theocratic regime. The IRGC was a small and ineffective organization compared to Iran's Army and Secret Service; however, the Iran-Iraq War made this organization a first rate fighting army. The other major factor that made IRGC a rising star was its unconditional loyalty to the establishment. This helped them to expand their operational capabilities beyond anyone's imagination.

The Iranian political elite clearly understood they needed a modern approach to old problems. Right after the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iranian government put intensive efforts into building institutions specializing in government, politics and security. Naturally, the IRGC became the first candidate to implement this new political approach. The government strongly encouraged IRGC officers and members to obtain a higher education in any field that they desired. Unlimited financial assistance made this organization a hub of intellectual capability and a “soft powerhouse” to be taken seriously.

The government allowed the IRGC to be involved in creating and running think-tank organizations, which heavily emphasized national security and military issues. One of the IRGC's creations is the Cultural Secretariat of the IRGC Chief of Staff, located in the former US Embassy residence in Tehran. This organization is the center of the IRGC's soft power. Besides other responsibilities, the Cultural Secretariat exclusively researches and writes on

psychological operations. In the last three years, this office has published a very sophisticated quarterly called the *Journal of Psychological Operations*. This journal exhibits a high level of professionalism, and introduces very complicated articles about many different international and regional issues. It is worth mentioning that it also translates many US psychological operations articles into Farsi. This journal should receive the highest attention from US psychological operations specialists, academia and relevant policy makers.

### Background

After 9/11, the United States engaged in serious conflicts in the Middle East and other parts of the world. The greatest engagements took place in Afghanistan and Iraq, where US forces were able to victoriously defeat both the Taliban and Iraqi Army in a very short period of time. The US Army's decisive victory opened an unprecedented new era in a region where the Islamic Republic of Iran automatically became a regional superpower, after 1400 years.

However, Iranian specialists noted the US presence presented a serious threat to Iranian national security and its regional sphere of influence. For instance, the Iranian journal *Defense Policy* evaluated the current Middle East situation and its problems based on a few important factors that could eventually influence Iranian interests. The author observes:

*The Middle East is in total chaos because of the lack of security structure, the influence of domestic politics, regional countries' intergovernmental relations, and trans-regional influences that create a chaotic situation in the region. Based on the factor of regional insecurity, Iran's government cannot afford to ignore the crucial elements of defense policy such as self-reliance, and coalition formation that generates power, containment, and prevention.*

Besides self-reliance and forming coalitions with regional countries, Iranian military analysts want to place checks and balances on the US via containment and war prevention. At the same time, Iran complains about US behavior toward the Middle East and her failure to acknowledge that in the post 9/11 era, Iran plays a positive role in the region and does not create extra problems. The Iranian side believes their country's post-9/11 behavior should be considered seriously and rewarded by providing regional opportunities for Iran. In contrast, Iran did not receive any reward while the United States engaged in direct intervention in the region, and implemented belligerent policies which directly undermined Iranian national security during a time of increased economic, political, cultural, and military pressures.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the Iranian policy of containment and prevention toward the US, and the Iranian belief that the US is responsible for belligerent anti-Iranian policies, continues to help generate regional confrontation between both countries.

Besides this competition, Iran feels extremely vulnerable to internal and external pressures. The country must learn how to survive in our fast-paced world. In other words, the Iranian state is competing against time, and clearly understands it does not have enough time to reach equality on either the regional or international scene. Mr. Morad Ali Sadoughi, a political analyst

at the Iranian Center for Strategic Studies, notes:

*The Islamic Republic of Iran struggles to protect the country's political independence, and pursues sovereign economic, military and cultural values that will be futile if the Republic does not take serious steps to encourage technical, scientific innovations, or at least obtain technology for home grown productions. The other important issue is that the government must help to create a strong research and development base in country. If the government does not pay attention to these issues, this country will walk through a future that others will design for [and thereby decide] her fate.<sup>3</sup>*

In addition to regional competition and technological problems, both of which directly influence Iranian national security, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the US have additional outstanding problems. These include: nuclear issues, the war on terrorism, Iran's role in destabilizing both Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran's antagonism toward Israel, and so on. All of these reasons have made Iran believe the US will eventually try to overthrow the current Iranian government, either by military or political means.

Furthermore, the US has extensive presence in Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan and other neighboring countries. Iranian military planners are facing a bitter reality that Iran is incapable of winning a symmetric war against the United States. Therefore, they have turned their interests to other US military capabilities, such as asymmetric warfare in the streets of Baghdad and Kabul, and psychological operations in the OEF and OIF regions.

With regard to asymmetric warfare, the Iranian military leadership—especially the IRGC—is thoroughly preparing for a possible US land invasion. They studied Iraq and Afghan asymmetric warfare tactics very closely. They came to the conclusion that in order to contain any future US land invasion, they should at least remind American military planners and soldiers that whatever they witnessed in Iraq and Afghanistan would be nothing in comparison to Iran. The ongoing recruitment of suicide bombers is a clear manifestation of this trend.

In the last few years, suicide bombing units were created in cities across Iran, with leaders even openly asking people to participate in these units. Only a year ago the "Basij" paramilitary group printed applications for new recruits wanting to join these suicide groups. This application it was mentioned that "in order to achieve all-round readiness against the enemies of Islam and the sacred Islamic Republic and to protect the foundations of Islam, the Lovers of Martyrdom Garrison plans to organize 'a martyrdom-seeking division' for each province in the country and give them specific and specialized training. We therefore request all our pious brothers and sisters, who are committed and determined to defend Islam, if willing, to submit two photographs of themselves, a copy of their identity cards, and the filled-in application form below to the following address, so that preparations for their organization and training could begin."<sup>4</sup>

Under heavy international pressure, the Islamic Republic ceased to advertise creation of the suicide divisions after it

passed this responsibility to a non governmental organization called “The International Headquarters for Honoring Muslim Martyrs.” This group tries to recruit volunteers from all walks of life. An even more specific application form lets volunteers mention *where* they want to conduct their suicide mission: fighting against the American forces in Iraq; fighting against the Israeli forces in Palestine; and finally, killing [author] Salman Rushdi.

The previously mentioned evaluation of the current US PSYOP effort in OEF and OIF, published in the *Journal of Psychological Operations* provides a very valuable resource for understanding Iranian military doctrine in more depth.<sup>5</sup>

The reason behind this extensive Iranian interest in US psychological operations does not stem from a position of power and self-confidence; rather, it comes from the fact that the Iranian political elites feel extremely weak and vulnerable to any outside pressure on the Iranian state. This feeling of insecurity comes from two different directions: the Mullahs and the nationalists. The Mullahs display self-preservation behavior, as they try to preserve their physical well-being and political future by hiding behind the state. On the other hand, nationalists believe any serious foreign military operation or internal political instability will endanger the Iranian state for a long period of time.

Ali Reza Biabannavard is the author of “A Comparative Study of US PSYOP in Iraq and Afghanistan.” He discusses the theoretical issues of psychological operations through the early nineteenth century, including the Clausewitzian theories of war and peace. He notes that the father of European modern military strategy clearly understood the importance of psychological operations as a tool for victory.

The first very striking element is that an Iranian military analyst—who had close ties with the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—begins to incorporate Western understanding of peace and war into his analysis. This is of major importance, as some [Western] people complain that we are unable to understand the Iranian behavior, because they are distinctly different. On the contrary, Iranian politicians and military leaders' behaviors are very much predictable if we try to understand them through their literature and analysis; and they seem to have less trouble understanding us.

The second step in the pre-war psychological process is to prepare potential allies. One must convince the international

*Martyrdom seekers recruitment form.*  
*(Iranfocus.com)*



*Fortress on the Iran-Iraq border: (Defense Link)*

community that the agent country's action works in favor of the world community, thus benefiting everyone. The agent country does not need to be very ideological, but does need to use a common language that everyone can agree upon.<sup>9</sup>

The last step of the pre-war psychological operations process is to convince the target country's citizens they will be better off without their current leader(s).<sup>10</sup> Here the author provides an interesting example from the end of the 1991 Desert Storm operation in Southern Iraq. The people there were tired of the Baath Party dictatorship, and the Iraqi government's leadership was weak. According to this Iranian explanation, the situation "forced" people to fall under the influence of American psychological operations.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the Southern Iraq Shia population rose against Saddam Hussein's government hoping they could get help from coalition forces in order to topple the government. On the contrary, they never received coalition assistance, and their uprising was crushed in blood. In other words, the author considered the Shia population's uprising a direct consequence of the Coalitions' psychological operations during Desert Storm.

After the pre-war psychological preparation of all interested parties, the agent country enters into direct confrontation with the target country's military. The psychological operation process is mostly concentrated on the battlefield, and the plan is to weaken the enemy army's personnel and soldiers. The author suggests a successful military operation depends on how willing military planners are to work with psychological operations specialists, in order to make sure their operations match PSYOP tactics, thus convincing enemy forces that resistance is no longer an option. The impact of PSYOP is very short lived because of the high pace of operations; therefore, any military or propaganda activity must be launched simultaneously before allowing the enemy time to organize a response.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the most difficult part of the PSYOP process begins right after the end of hostilities. Again, the most important task in this stage is to legitimize the operation. The legitimizing portion of the operation targets the same three audiences as in the pre-war period. The first is the agent country's internal public opinion, emphasizing that the operation was in fact successful, and everyone is content with

the results. The second part is convincing the international community of what a great job the agent country has done in order to preserve the other country's interests and security. The third part of the legitimizing process is to convince the target country's population that they are better off without their previous leader(s) and they will be at an advantage with their newfound freedom.

### **The US vs the Middle East**

According Mr. Biabannavard, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Second Gulf War the US capitalist system needed to reconstruct an "imaginary enemy," this time in the Middle East and in other Muslim countries. The US began to organize a very sophisticated PSYOP effort against these countries.<sup>13</sup> In other words, one can conclude the author believes the US is not capable of maintaining global power without having an ideological or economical enemy.

In addition to creating an enemy, the US government got involved in shaping the destiny of the Middle East. However, this program faces serious obstacles, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which reduce US influence in the Arab world, while providing unconditional support to the Israeli side. The other problem was rapid disintegration of the Second Gulf War Coalition, thus the United States was unable to implement its policies as effectively as desired. Further, Russian and Chinese elements in the region were able to change the balance of power by providing missile and nuclear technologies to Iran, which consequently they can use to challenge the US position in the region.<sup>14</sup> This possibility also made the US nervous, and uncomfortable with the fact that both Russia and China were extensively involved in Iran's economy. Further, both states provided Iran very sophisticated military technology, which could create serious problems in the future.

The important problem here was the unofficial alliance between Russia and China, which strives to create a new balance of power by introducing missile and nuclear technologies to challenge US hegemony in the region. The author believes the United States was forced to intensify its PSYOP against both Iraq and Iran<sup>15</sup> due to two factors: the US's intention to create a new enemy; and Sino-Russian efforts to create a new balance of power in the region. The author notes the history of US pressure on Middle Eastern countries dates back to the 1970s, and the high point of this pressure came in 2003, when the United States attacked Iraq.<sup>16</sup>

In the last part of his analysis, Biabannavard describes US PSYOP tactics in the region. In general, the author believes the US designed a very sophisticated operation. He emphasizes thirteen different steps used to manipulate Middle Eastern countries, with the first and second step somehow related. The first is US assistance in building satellite media; and the second is advertising the American way of life, which is directly contradictory to the region's indigenous traditions. In other words, the United States is challenging Islamic thought and social structure, in order to create a favorable environment for US policies, and ultimately to bring the area under the Western umbrella through military, economic or ideological means.

The other eleven steps include a negative explanation of the Middle Eastern countries' policies and the exaggeration of regional problems. In addition, he finds the US discredits the regional leaders on the basis of financial, political and moral corruption. Furthermore, the United States signs one-sided treaties with individual regional countries with a complete disregard to the other regional players. Additional steps include: undermining the interests of other countries; exaggerating regional crises; creating regional and ethnic conflicts; exaggerating the defense of human rights and the rights of minorities; and finally, financially assisting the opposition groups.<sup>17</sup>

Iranian PSYOP specialists believe these are the major points of United States concentration, in order to force changes in behavior on a regional scale. In addition to this general statement regarding the United States influence operations in the Middle East, the author provides two current examples.

### **Afghanistan & Iraq vs the US**

Mr. Biabannavard follows the same analysis when examining Afghanistan and Iraq. He divides US PSYOP into three different stages as before, noting some differences in each country, but describing generally similar processes.

#### **Afghanistan**

"A comparative study of US PSYOP in Iraq and Afghanistan" claims the United States was prepared to overthrow the Taliban government long before 11 September 2001. Biabannavard perceives some irony in this behavior. During the [1979-1988] Soviet-Afghan war, the same militant groups—and even Osama Bin Laden—were on the US Government's payroll for a long period of time. However, the reason behind the change of allegiances in Washington was based on different factors. The first reason was the existence of paramilitary groups, such as Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, which were responsible for bloody attacks against American interests around the world.<sup>18</sup> The second reason was purely geostrategic: Afghanistan is located on the crossroads of China, India, Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia. Of course, the US was aware of the location of Central Asian oil and gas pipelines crossing Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> Whichever country controls Afghanistan can ultimately control the economic and military routes along the north-south axis of Central Asia, and the east-west axis connecting China to Iran. Therefore, having Afghanistan on the American side would help contain China, Russia, and Iran, while at the same time assisting US access to Central Asia's natural resources. All of this could ultimately release the US from being a hostage to the Persian Gulf oil producers.

The third reason was 9/11 provided two different golden opportunities for US interests. First, it legitimized the Afghan war as a war on terror; and second, Russia and China were unable to oppose US retaliation, thus becoming practically pacified on the Central Asian chessboard for a short period of time.

Based on these military, geostrategic, economic, and other windows of opportunity, the United States launched a

PSYOP campaign in two different directions. The first covered the regional and international offensive against the Taliban government; and the second convinced the Afghan people not to defend the Taliban government.

On the regional and international levels, the United States accused the Taliban government of providing shelter to Bin Laden and his group, plus offering drug smugglers safe haven. They also pointed to the Taliban's ruthless behavior toward Afghan people, their support of the war on terrorism, masterminding September 11th, and finally weakening US national security in the process.<sup>20</sup> This triggered a significant US reaction toward the Taliban government. Preparing international public opinion would have to be complemented by domestic reactions against the Taliban government.

On the domestic level, US PSYOP picked up on the Taliban government's inability to solve the Afghan people's social and economic problems after the end of the Soviet-Afghan War. Themes dealt with destruction of historical monuments, distribution of food during official holidays, and the establishment of Afghan radio stations in San Francisco and Washington, DC. Biabannavard wraps up his discussion with development of a secret radio station, the distribution of pamphlets, and the conduct of a propaganda war.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Iraq**

The second case in "A comparative study of US PSYOP in Iraq and Afghanistan," asserts that immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States decided to overthrow regimes outside the US sphere of influence, by any means. The first target of this new "humanitarian intervention" policy was Iraq.

Biabannavard goes on to subdivide phases of the US-Iraqi PSYOP operation. In the first place, the US found a perfect reason to challenge the Iraqi government by claiming the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). At the same time, the world community had undeniable facts that Iraqi forces used chemical weapons against their own Kurdish population and Iranian forces during the First Gulf War, and during the Iran-Iraq War. Therefore, the WMD accusations worked very well against the Iraqi government.



*Civil Affairs team gears up in Afghanistan.  
(Defense Link)*

The second step began right after the September 11th event, when the United States declared that it would launch a military operation and go to war if it is necessary to contain the spread of WMD technology.<sup>22</sup> However, the author sees a different reason behind American officials' tough attitude toward Iraq. He argues that the major reason behind the Iraqi operation was neither WMD nor September 11th. Rather, Biabannavard sees economic reasons as the main cause behind US intentions. In other words, he believes the current Iraqi war is about oil, and nothing else.

US PSYOP against Iraq had two different legs: one was the preparation of regional and international public opinion against the Iraqi government, and the second was the launching of a negative advertisement campaign against Iraqi political leaders.

Furthermore, Biabannavard notes the US government and media tried to use the September 11th episode, especially its massive destruction and death toll, as an advertising tool to convince the US and international public of the need to attack Iraq. The United States censored a UN report, which dealt with 24 US companies assisting with the production of chemical weapons in Iraq, using previous news about the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>23</sup> This created an "evil" public opinion image of Saddam Hussein, and threatened that if Iraq maintained WMD, the conflict would rapidly grow and suck other countries into the conflict. It also used the public media to exaggerate Iraq and Saddam's danger with regards to WMD. Finally, US PSYOP advertised the fact that if Iraqi WMD were destroyed, there would be a positive effect of reducing the overall danger of spreading WMD.<sup>24</sup>

The US' international and regional PSYOP against the Iraqi regime was extremely effective. The reason behind this astonishing success was the nature of the Iraqi government and its leadership, who created more regional enemies than anyone else in the history of the Middle East. Another reason was Iraq's prior use of WMD: it was so real, no one doubted the possibility that Iraq had something to hide from the international community.

The pre-war PSYOP phase ended by discrediting the Iraqi political leadership. Their reputation had already been harmed by their regional behavior: an unforgivable attitude toward opposition, ethnic and religious groups. These negative domestic and regional attitudes toward Iraq made the US PSYOP designers' job very easy.

These Iranian observations go on to describe how the US dealt with the Iraqi people, using pamphlets, radio and television. At the same time, US forces were able to distribute small radios among Iraqi military personnel, and encourage them to listen to the broadcasts. Television programs displayed video of Bathist officials killing people, as a propaganda tool to satisfy the Iraqi anti-government opposition. The TV messages promised to protect Iraqi holy sites and important economic objects, and to prevent the looting of Iraqi antiques. Videos about the lavish lifestyle of Saddam and his family, versus the difficult lives of the majority of Iraqi people, propagated Saddam's disrespected of Iraqi values and ideals.

The Americans repeatedly declared they had killed high ranking Iraqi Army officers and Saddam in order to weaken the people's resistance against the American forces. Finally, the Americans displayed Saddam's supporters who were taken prisoner, or their dead bodies.<sup>25</sup>

It is vital to see how Iranian PSYOP specialists judged US efforts, as well as how they evaluated both Iraqi and Afghan responses—and finally, what was their evaluation? "A Comparative Study of US PSYOP in Iraq and Afghanistan" describes the US PSYOP campaigns as very effective tools, designed to castigate both countries' political leadership, and convince people that life after Saddam and the Taliban will be better. However, the article also points out serious inadequacies in the Iraqi and Afghani response to US PSYOP. These stem from the style of the Iraqi and Taliban leadership, and how they behaved toward their own citizens and the rest of the world.

Iranians believe the success of US PSYOP was dependant on several important factors: 1) lack of an effective connection between the Iraqi and Taliban leadership and its citizens; 2) the US knowledge of both countries political systems and their governing tools; 3) lack of effective media; 4) people being unsatisfied and discontent with their leaders; 5) inability to mobilize people in a short period of time; 6) lack of effective road systems; 7) no centralized and effective decision-making center; 8) the government's inability to satisfy the needs of the military because of hasty decision-making; 9) the personalization of operational and administrative plans; 10) their isolation from the rest of the world; 11) their lack of education; and finally, 12) the inability to clearly evaluate the belligerent countries' capabilities.<sup>26</sup>

### **What Did Iranians Learn from Iraq & Afghanistan?**

Psychological operations are very complicated. They require in-depth knowledge of the target countries' culture and their social, economic, military and political structures. Iranian psychological operations warriors are learning the reality of modern warfare. They value US experience in this field, and try very hard to learn and understand American successes and shortcomings in different theaters, regardless of the outcome.

This analysis of US PSYOP in Iraq and Afghanistan also serves Iranian interests very well, helping them understand the reality of life, and how they can contain future US PSYOP against Iran. The Iranian evaluation of Iraqi and Afghanistan's inadequacies in their fight against American forces is very realistic. They clearly mention the fact that in both countries the political leadership and people were not on the same page. At the same time, both governments were unable to satisfy popular demands.

In the current period, it is especially important to see what Iranian military planners and PSYOP warriors learned from the Iraqi and Afghan experience. Most importantly, they want to contain anti-Iranian US PSYOP efforts in the region.

One can suggest the Islamic Republic of Iran is currently preparing for a PSYOP counterattack against the United States. It is worth mentioning that the current Iranian government and its leadership are not just nationalistic; they consider Iran

as a jumping off point to create a worldwide Islamic empire under the leadership of the Lord of Ages (Imam Zaman). They do not value the nature of Iranian nationalism as much as one might suspect, either its distinctive culture or its background.

The Iranian leadership is very realistic and flexible in their thought and belief system. In order to mobilize people, they use the Shia-Islamic order which is called 'Taqqieh,' literally means "the practice of hiding one's belief under duress."<sup>27</sup> One may also view this as abuse of Iranian people for the government's own ends. Taqqieh is the Islamic version of Machiavellian politics, in which "politics have no relation to morals." In other words, the current Iranian leadership is in danger, and they know the people are not willing to risk their lives for the defense of Islam. Therefore, they have decided to "hijack" the traditions and belief system, attempting to fulfill their goals under the banner of the Iranian nationalism.

These cosmopolitan Muslim internationalists have a lot to think about. They desire something which is creative, important, escalates Iranian pride and nationalism, creates a safety net around the Iranian political system, unifies the people regardless of their political or ethnic background, and covers the weakness of the state with popular support.

They have also found a magic tool to save themselves, and contain their enemies. This is very interesting, and at the same time, very dangerous: it is called the uranium enrichment process. Such a plan makes economic sense, provides a sense of pride for Iranian people for their scientific achievements, unifies people against an enemy who wants to stop this process, and saves the Iranian political system from further disarray (for the time being). More importantly, it makes any PSYOP success very difficult, and maybe even fruitless.

The current international crisis regarding Iran's uranium enrichment is part of the Iranian psychological counterattack against the United States. It is worth noting the Iranian political elites clearly understood the uranium enrichment issue has no military use whatsoever. Any damage to the United States interests around the world by nuclear weapons, either by themselves or by their proxies, is not an option. The Iranian political elites undoubtedly accepted that any nuclear blackmail against the US or other countries would trigger a heavy response, quite possibly destroying Iran and her political system.

It appears the Iranian political elites are much more into preserving their grip on power and their Islamic mythology of helping to return the Lord of Ages (Imam Zaman) than thinking about Iranian national interests. They see a close relation between preserving the system and the existence of a viable Iranian state. Therefore, they are defending the country



*A contemporary view of Iranian leadership.  
(The Persian Journal)*

for the sake of their own interest and religious beliefs, and nothing else.

The reason behind this conclusion is very simple. First, Iranians are extremely nationalistic, and they have no positive feeling toward any attacking country as a savior. Secondly, they want to solve their government problems in-house, without third party involvement. Finally, they are witnesses to the realities on the ground in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, it is very difficult to convince any Iranian that it is greener on the other side of the fence.

## Conclusion

"A Comparative Study of US PSYOP in Iraq and Afghanistan" is an important document for understanding how Iranians analyze US PSYOP strengths and weaknesses in Afghanistan and Iraq. Clearly, their analysis uncovered what they see as deficiencies. One conclusion they drew was that in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the Center of Gravity (the triangle of government, military and population) is weaker than the Islamic Republic of Iran's COG. Iran clearly understands they have no time to repair all of their own COG deficiencies. In Biabannavard's opinion, it will require a tremendous IIR government effort to successfully respond to US PSYOP efforts. Therefore, they are trying to use preventative measures to reduce the chances of a US invasion of Iran.

Organizing the "suicide divisions" (approximately 60,000 suicide volunteers) is one of the first steps to remind American military planners that attacking Iran will not be an easy task, and will cause unbearably heavy US military casualties. The uranium enrichment issue is also an example of shrewd PSYOP planning. They put a very delicate issue before the people, asking if they want another country making decisions for their ancient nation with a long tradition of imperial power. Iran should have the right to do whatever it wants according to the Iranian government. Obviously Iranian national pride is no less important than American or British pride, or of citizens in any other modern country anywhere in the world. Therefore, the world will witness an Iranian nationalistic reaction against any forceful solution to the uranium enrichment problem. Iranian PSYOP against the US will be strategic and will cover many different areas of concern. It is important to remember the Islamic Republic of Iran is working hard to contain any US capability of launching an attack against it, and is against any withdrawal from anything its political elites believe.

The recent US visit of former Iranian President Khatami is part of the counter-PSYOP against US efforts regarding the uranium enrichment question. The Iranian regime sent a very charming personality, and highly educated person, to create some influence in US intellectual circles. The goal is to get the world to question American policies on Iran. This type of

strategic Iranian PSYOP will be the standard for the coming years: the US must be prepared.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jahangir Karami, "Mohit Amniyati Khavarmiyaneh va Siyasat Defae Jomhuri Eslami Iran," Majaleh Siyasat Defae, Payiz va Zemestan 1384, 52. Njdeh Asisian, trans. "The Middle East Security Environment and IRI's Defense Policy," by Jahangir Karami, *The Journal of Defense Policy*/ 13,14, winter (2005-06): 52.

<sup>2</sup> Keyhan Barzegar, "Tazad Naghshha: Bararsi Rishehay Monazeh Iran va Amrica Baad az Havadess September 11," Rahbord, *Markaz Tahgihat Strategic*, Majmae Tashkhis Maslehat Nezam, Shomareh 38, 26 Ordibehesht, 1382, 146. And, Njdeh Asisian, trans. "Conflicting Roles: Examination of Roots of Iran-US conflict in the Post September 11", By Keyhan Zargar, *Rahbord Journal*, Center for Strategic Research affiliated to the Expediency Council/38, (2006): 146.

<sup>3</sup> Morad Ali Sadoughi, "Strategy Amnyat Meli Jomhuri Eslami Iran dar Daheh Sevom (1): Mokhtasat Kelidi Siyasat dar Donyaye Jahani Shodan", Gahnameh Bardasht Ava, *Markaz Barrasihahye Strategic Riayast Jomhuri*, Sal Aval, Shomareh 1, Safaeh 19. And, Morad Ali Sadoughi, "The Islamic Republic of Iran National Security in the Third Decade (1): The key Characteristics of politics in the Eve of Globalization", *The Bardash Aval Journal*/ 1, no.1 (2001): 19.

<sup>4</sup> Iran Focus. "Iran weekly advertises "application form" for suicide operations." Available from <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=2949> Internet; accessed Sep. 10, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Biabannavard, Ali Reza. "Barrasii Tatbighi Amalyat Ravani Iyalat Motahedeh Dar Do Keshwar Afghanistan va. Araq." *Faslnameh Elmi-Takhasosi Amalyat Ravani*. 3.11 (2006): 124. And, Biabannavard, Ali Reza. "A Comparative Study of US PSYOP in Iraq and Afghanistan." *Scientific-Professional Quarterly on Psychological Operations*. 3.11 (2006): 124.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Biabannavard, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Biabannavard, p. 125.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 126

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 127

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 128

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 129

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 130


<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 133

<sup>27</sup> "Islamic-Shia Words Glossary"; available from <http://www.revertmuslims.com/glossary.html#t> Internet; accessed Sept. 2006. 

#### Other works by the author:

"Sustaining the Struggle: Interplay of Ethno-Nationalism and Religion," in *An Army at War, Proceedings of the Combat Studies Institute*.

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